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ABSTRACT

The process through which the policy and beliefs of a leadership development program at the University of Northern Colorado was developed is described in this paper. The departmental philosophy for effective leadership is based on administrative capacity to function within a diverse environment, achievement of a shared organizational vision, and continual learning. Seven belief statements and their rationale based on this philosophy are described: (1) human growth and development are lifelong pursuits; (2) organizations are artifacts of a larger society; (3) learning, teaching, and collegiality are fundamental activities of educational organizations; (4) validated knowledge and active inquiry form the basis of practice; (5) moral and ethical imperatives drive leadership behavior; (6) leadership encompasses a learned set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes; and (7) leaders effect positive change in individuals and organizations. A conclusion is that administrator preparation programs must develop a culture in which leaders understand how to create collegial learning environments that focus on the growth of the total person. (27 references) (LMI)

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TESTING OUR VALUES: STATEMENTS OF BELIEFS THAT UNDERLIE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

Criticisms of administrator preparation programs are not new. For the past seven or eight years, in particular, programs that prepare individuals to assume leadership positions in our schools have been under scrutiny. A few of the criticisms include too much emphasis on research and not enough on practice, outmoded delivery mechanisms, low standards and fragmented coursework (Achilles, Brubaker, and Snyder, 1990; Forsyth, 1987; Hallinger and Murphy, 1991, Thompson, 1989).

These conditions have led some to believe that administrator preparation programs have failed. Forsyth (1987) states that the reasons for failure rest in the negligence of schools of education to define their mission, lack of adequate funding, and a near absence of collaboration between university professors, state officials, and practicing administrators in building rigorous and relevant preservice preparation programs.

Because of the numerous inadequacies prevalent in traditional preparation programs, various groups initiated calls for reform. For example, the University Council for Educational Administration established the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration in 1985 which issued its report, Leaders for America's Schools, outlining specific standards to which the profession should adhere. In 1989 the National Policy Board for Educational Administration issued its report, Improving the Preparation of School Administrators: An Agenda for Reform, with what some believed to be drastic recommendations for reform.

The Division of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Northern Colorado responded to the call for reform of administrator preparation programs. The purpose of this paper is to describe the process for deriving the philosophy and beliefs of the Division, and to specifically describe the beliefs that drive our leadership development program.

Process for Deriving Philosophy and Beliefs

Before depicting the beliefs and philosophy that drive our program, it might be helpful to describe the process we used to collectively develop these beliefs. Of major importance is the fact that we came together as a new faculty to develop a new vision of educational leadership. During several of our initial faculty meetings, faculty engaged in brainstorming sessions to articulate what we believed about organizations, people, and education. Two full-time doctoral students also participated in these sessions. Because of our diverse backgrounds and varied experiences, we had extensive discussions about our philosophy and generated a long list of beliefs. Much time was spent combining, deleting, analyzing, and reflecting on the beliefs that we had generated.

The following Fall, the Division added three new faculty members which led to a continuation of refining and revising our beliefs and philosophy. Additionally, the Division formed an Advisory Council comprised of practitioners and business representatives to provide feedback on our efforts to date. Several new full-time doctoral students also provided input in the process. In the end, the entire faculty reached consensus on the underlying philosophy and the critical beliefs that would drive our program.

Description of Underlying Philosophy and Belief Statements

During the same process of developing our beliefs we established an underlying philosophy or vision that we collectively hold for effective leaders:

> Educational leaders possess knowledge of self, others, organizations, and society necessary to perform creatively and effectively in diverse environments. They engage people in identifying and working toward the accomplishment of a shared vision for the organization. Leaders incorporate the ideas, values, and experiences reflective of a pluralistic society and promote continual learning.

Using this philosophy as a foundation, we developed a set of seven belief statements. These belief statements guide our entire curriculum and delivery mechanisms, and are non-negotiable. The following section provides a description of our belief statements and a rationale for these beliefs in the context of educational leadership.

Human growth and development are lifelong pursuits.

One of the major responsibilities of educational leaders is that of fostering the total growth and development of others in the organization. This means that educational leaders must express the unconditional belief that people have the capacity to grow and improve. Most importantly, it is the obligation of our profession to help every student in our educational institutions to grow and improve. An additional responsibility of educational leaders is to provide the kind of environment that fosters a desire for life-long learning. For children, being a life-long learner means becoming motivated and developing skills to teach themselves. For adults, being a life-long learner allows them to use knowledge and skills in their professional and personal lives.

One of the criticisms of traditional preparation programs is the lack of attention to adult development and learning (Hallinger & Murphy, 1991; Achilles, Brubaker, Snyder, 1990). Theorists of adult learning and development point to the need of adult learners to be exposed to alternative modes of instruction (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991; Knowles, 1980). Adults learn most effectively when the learning is in response to a particular need or problem with which they are familiar. Knowles (1980) notes that "andragogy is based on the insight that the deepest need an adult has is to be treated as an adult, to be treated as a self-directing person, to be treated with respect" (p.36). We believe that leader preparation programs need to focus on self-directed and adult learning. We also believe that it is critical to have a knowledge of, and model a sensitivity toward, adult learners because educational administrators must work with adults constantly in their work environments.

Organizations are artifacts of a larger society.

All of us live and breathe organizations. In fact, organizations are comprised of people and are part of a larger social, economic, political, and legal environment in which they are embedded. Because organizations exist as microcosms of the larger society, it important to view organizations from multiple perspectives so that diversity is valued. These perspectives may play out in different ways such as studying organizations from a social science, philosophic, or a humanities perspective.

Another approach to viewing organizations from different lenses is that described by Bolman and Deal (1991) in which

organizations are studied from the structural, human resource, symbolic, and political perspectives. The important point underlying this belief is that organizations are comprised of people who have varying backgrounds, experiences, and values which make organizations extremely complex. It is through a greater understanding of this diversity and complexity that we are able to create organizations, in particular educational organizations, that enhance the growth of people existing within. While we cannot eliminate the ambiguities of organizational life, we can equip students with basic concepts and analyses of organizational life that will assist them when they serve in leadership roles (NPBEA, 1989).

Learning, teaching, and collegiality are fundamental activities of educational organizations.

Learning and teaching are the technological core of schooling. Many traditional administrator preparation programs have seemingly omitted this belief. Both the NPBEA (1989) and the National Association for Elementary Principals (1986) recommend that administrators have a strong grounding in teaching and learning processes. In schools, the task of learning and teaching has, in many instances, been relegated to teachers so that administrators could focus on "management" issues. A task force of the Holmes Group made a "pointed and explicit critique of the field of educational administration and its failure to take its central purpose from teaching and learning..." (Holmes Group, 1987, p.3). We believe that learning and teaching should be the primary purpose of educational organizations and that educational leaders model

this importance. To that end, prospective school leaders need to understand the basic processes of teaching and learning at the school level.

Not only is an emphasis on teaching and learning missing in many preparation programs, collegiality is also. There is much emphasis currently on the need for collegiality and collaboration in schools (Rosenholtz, 1989; Little, 1985). Collegiality and collaboration will not become reality unless leadership exists to promote such norms. Further, collegiality is crucial to the success of beginning principals in providing much needed support. We believe that administrator preparation programs need to model collegiality and collaboration in order to prepare future educational leaders to establish these norms in their particular organizations.

Validated knowledge and active inquiry form the basis of practice.

Acting primarily on personal preferences may lead to poor decisions. One of the criticisms of beginning principals, in particular, is that they have a tendency to "shoot from the hip." Recent research indicates first year principals have problems with role clarification, technical problems, and socialization to the profession (Daresh, 1986; Weindling & Earley, 1987). To assist future administrators in effective practice, we believe that a strong foundation in various knowledge bases and a predisposition to active inquiry are necessary. Decisions should be made, not on a whim, but on validated, empirical generalizations coupled with what is known to be effective from experience. From an inquiry perspective, administrators should engage in "problem finding"

(Petersen, 1983) rather than simply looking for surface level solutions to complex problems. In addition, administrators should engage in reflective practice and be able to use multiple perspectives and methodologies in gathering and analyzing information (Schon, 1983).

Moral and ethical imperatives drive leadership behavior.

We believe that a firm foundation in moral and ethical issues is a necessary prerequisite to effective leadership. Students must critically examine their own belief systems and their reasons for wanting to be educational leaders. Further, educational leaders need to understand the moral and ethical dimensions of individual behavior and how that impacts organizational decisions.

Until recently, few programs in educational administration had a focus on ethical issues (Farquhar,1981). In response to an apparent lack of grounding in ethics, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (1989) recommended that moral and ethical dimensions of schooling be addressed in preparation programs. Similarly, Barnett, Norris, & McQuarrie (1991), Evers (1985), and Greenfield (1985) call for the inclusion of ethics and morality in the preparation of educational leaders so that administrators are better able to understand the importance and value of schooling and to guide in decision-making.

Leadership encompasses a learned set of knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

I have alluded to the importance of having a knowledge base to guide educational leaders in the decision-making process. The knowledge base developed in our Division is derived from research,

reform proposals, and recommendations from professional organizations. For example, The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (1989) recommends that a common core of knowledge and skills include organizational theory, leadership and management processes, policy analysis, and societal and cultural influences on schooling, to name a few.

Skills necessary for prospective educational leaders are numerous. While it is difficult to provide opportunities for students to practice and learn all the skills they might need as leaders in an organization, it is possible to focus on a few skills that experience and research tell us are important. Two frameworks serve as examples of the types of skills necessary for effective leaders. One framework by Katz (1974) stresses technical, human, and educational skill development. A similar and more recent framework is proposed by Sergiovanni (1991) and emphasizes technical, human, educational, symbolic, and cultural forces necessary for effective leadership in schools.

Professional associations also recommend proficiencies and skills necessary for effective administrator preparation. For instance, The National Association of Elementary Principals recommends that effective preparation programs include leadership proficiencies, supervisory proficiencies, and administrative/management proficiencies. Whatever the framework used, we believe that there are certain knowledge bases, skills and attitudes that can be learned by prospective leaders to help them thrive in educational organizations.

Leaders effect positive change in individuals and organizations.

The literature is full of research that points to the importance of of the leader in initiating, implementing, and sustaining change in organizations (e.g. Bennis, 1985; Fullan, 1991); Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, Hall, 1987). More specifically, the research points to the importance of the principal in effecting positive change in the school organization (Hall & Parkay, 1991).

We believe that prospective school leaders can learn to initiate and manage change effectively so that positive outcomes occur for students and staff within the organization. The end result of the change process is not always positive. It requires the ability and skill to develop a shared vision for what the organization can become. Astute change agents also are able to get people within the organization to "rally around" the innovation so that it is successfully implemented and sustained.

Summary

There are still many unanwered questions about leadership preparation programs. Faculty do not espouse to have the "answers" with our new program at the University of Northern Colorado. But we do believe that we have a solid foundation that will provide the impetus for constant refinement during the process of testing our assumptions. The Division remains in the early stages of program development, but what we have observed so far, as we have made the transition from simply "offering courses" to providing a real program, is encouraging.

Current administrator preparation programs need to make significant changes to develop a culture where leaders understand

how to form collegial learning environments that focus on the growth of the total person. Maybe when administrator preparation programs change at the university level, we will see new norms developed at the school level that truly represent a teaching and learning culture.

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